

War, Love and A Sense of Freedom in Mrs Dalloway and Badhon Hara: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

It is not a hard task to imagine the impact of the First World War on authors and poets. The First World War was the first greatest hostility among the nations and the whole earth witnessed its devastation. At that time traditional norms began to receive a sudden shock. In every sector: social, economic or cultural, common people began to observe an unexpected transition and as authors and poets had more receptive personalities, they captured this situation and engaged themselves to put an end to the old systems. They manipulated their writings to welcome this new phenomenon. In Mrs Dalloway, Virginia Woolf has focused on post war London with people who have survived and continued their lives despite the tumult of war. The First World War also left great imprint on the history and psyche of the people of other part of the globe. In Kazi Nazrul Islam's famous epistolary novel Badhon Hara, some glimpses of the day to day lives of typical Bangali of West Bengal are portrayed during wartime. The events of both novels have an indirect link with the Great War but war is not the sole theme in both of these novels. These two novels emphasize human relationship, love and affection and make the readers aware of a sense of freedom. This paper tries to make a comparative study between Mrs. Dalloway and Badhon Hara to find out the similarities and also the unique properties that are manifested in these two pieces of post war literature.

Keywords: The First World War, Post War Literature, Relationship, Freedom.

1. Introduction

The tales are of two cities. The cities belong to two different continents; therefore, significant diversity among people is evident. The people of these two parts of the world have different colours, customs, manners and living standards. They have their long cherished history and tradition of their own which cannot be matched with the other one. Nonetheless, the time the tales depict is almost the same. It is the time of a great war in world's history. The distinguished English writer Virginia Woolf says, "Then suddenly like a chasm on a smooth road the war came"; the people who had been enjoying a state of security and tranquility suddenly felt an agitation due to the First World War which altered their conventional proceedings. Like a tsunami it brought about a mighty whirlpool and the traditional norms and beliefs were shaken enormously. Literary pieces have captured some images of that crucial situation. In Mrs Dalloway, Virginia Woolf has focused on post war London with people who have survived and continued their lives despite the tumult of war. The First World War also left great imprint on the history and psyche of the people of other part of the globe. In Kazi Nazrul Islam's famous epistolary novel Badhon Hara, some glimpses of the day to day lives of typical Bangali of West Bengal are portrayed during wartime. This paper tries to make a comparative study between Mrs. Dalloway and Badhon Hara to find out the similarities and also the unique properties that are manifested in these two pieces of post war literature. The paper tries to focus on the following research questions:

- What is the impact of the First World War in these two literary pieces of two well known writers?
- In which ways Mrs Dalloway resembles Badhon Hara as the novels portray people of two dissimilar communities?

- What are the unique properties in these two post war novels?

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2. Literature Review

Adeline Virginia Stephen (1882–1941) who is best known as Virginia Woolf is an eminent figure of twentieth century for her novels like *The Voyage Out*, *Jacob's Room*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, *Orlando*, etc. she did not exercise her genius only for novels but also produced essays on various topics: artistic theory, feminist issues, literary history and many others. *Mrs Dalloway* which is modeled as like as a Post-Impressionist painting, can be termed as Virginia Woolf's masterpiece. A large number of critical analyses have been carried out on *Mrs Dalloway*. Some researchers focused on the themes of the novel while others analysed her techniques. According to Leon Edel, the novel's magnificence depends on the talent with which Virginia Woolf portrays the minds of different characters and shows us the continuous movement from one mind to another. Maria DiBattista tries to illustrate the connection between different characters' identify and history, religion, time, etc. Elizabeth Abel makes a feminist reading of the novel and she opines that in the novel, Clarissa did not get opportunity to develop as a woman. Lucio Ruotolo gives attention to Clarissa's frank dealings of life. According to him, *Mrs. Dalloway* has surpassed the limits of gender, class and hierarchy.

The national poet of Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899 –1976) is one of the glowing stars in the history of Bangla literature. He was successful enough to impress the readers by his astonishing sets of poems, songs, novels, stories, dramas and essays. Nazrul is also regarded as a “rebel” poet. He was by nature an adventurous personality. His interest on contemporary political atmosphere and a strong desire for adventure made him to join the 49th Bengali regiment in 1917. Nazrul's active participation in the British Army inspired him to write *Badhon Hara*, an interesting epistolary novel where we can find “Nurul”, the central character, as an image of soldier Kazi Nazrul. *Badhon Hara* was first published in the 'Moslem Bharat' magazine during 1920. In 1927, the compiled publication was named, 'Badhon Hara'. Some scholars opine that Kazi Nazrul Islam's *Badhon Hara* can be regarded as the first epistolary novel written in Bangla. It comprises a series of personal letters of some characters of the novel. The letters expresses Nazrul's firsthand knowledge as a soldier in the 49th Bengali Regiment in the First World War. Prof. Rafiqul Islam says that the novel is important as it is written in “Promito Bangla”. Prof. Fakrul Alam thinks that it is Nazrul's self- portrait and it depicts his rebellious nature. Prof. Razia Sultana Khan focuses on the novel's theme of love and relationship although it was written during First World War. This paper tries to compare and contrast the two novels, *Mrs Dalloway* and *Badhon Hara*, because, both of them portray the lives of common people during and after the great war.

3. Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are

- To observe the theme of war as interwoven in the stories of the novels
- To find out the major themes of the novels other than war
- To explore Woolf and Nazrul's unique use of narrative technique and style

4. Methodology of the Research

To write this paper, data of secondary resources have been collected. Different types of library materials such as text books, reference books, journals, daily newspapers, scholarly articles, research papers have been consulted to gather information. Other types of materials available on internet have also been collected and analyzed.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1. The Theme of War

It is not a hard task to imagine the impact of WW I on authors and poets. WW I was the first greatest hostility among the nations and the whole earth witnessed its devastation. At that time traditional norms began to receive a sudden shock. In every sector: social, economic or cultural, common people began to observe an unexpected transition and as authors and poets had more receptive personalities, they captured this situation and engaged themselves to put an end to the old system. They manipulated their writings to welcome this new phenomenon.

Although both *Mrs Dalloway* and *Badhon Hara* are post war literature but surprisingly they are not “Military fiction”, that is, the primary action does not take place in the battlefield; moreover, the experience of WW I is not the central theme in these novels. There is not a single sketch of a battlefield like famous war novels: *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque or *A Farewell to Arms* by Earnest Hemingway. Remarque has depicted trench warfare of German soldiers while Hemingway has written about an American expatriate’s wartime experiences in the Italian army, that is to say, the novel’s first person account portrays glimpses of battlefield.

The novels, *Mrs Dalloway* and *Badhon Hara* do not portray wartime events, fighting or bloodshed; rather they implicitly describe the consequences of war, the condition of people during and after the Great War. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf shows us the post war London with her inhabitants who have become “hollow men” or who symbolize “the death of the soul” after the consequences of the Great War.

“The War was over, except for someone like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor house must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favorite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven — over” (Woolf, 1996, p. 6-7).

A good number of people are now suffering from neurosis; they are even frightened by a “violent explosion” caused by a motor car which they imagine as “a pistol shot in the street outside”. The immense force of war is seen acting upon the character of Septimus Warren Smith who is suffering from shell-shock and is gradually going mad. “Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now” (Woolf, 1996, p. 27). Lucrezia, the wife of war veteran Septimus, thinks that the war has cost her a lot. The life of this young woman is totally ruined because of Septimus’ joining the army. This is not “Septimus any longer, to say hard, cruel, wicked things, to talk to himself, to talk to a dead man...” (Woolf, 1996, p. 73). Septimus’ soldier friend Evans “had been killed in the war.” Lucrezia thinks that, “such things happen to everyone. Everyone has friends who were killed in the war.” When the disease becomes acute, Septimus loses control and commits suicide. On the other hand, Mrs Dalloway wants to forget the devastation of war, the hideousness of death by engaging herself to find out the beauty of the world but sometimes all her attempts fail. “Always her body went through it, when she was told, first, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt” (Woolf, 1996, p. 202). “[T]here was in the depths of her heart an awful fear” (Woolf, 1996, p. 203). At the end of the novel she thinks, “there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, ... this life, to be lived to the end” (Woolf, 1996, p. 203). War is not glorified in the novel *Mrs Dalloway* rather we can notice a pessimistic picture of civilization due to modern warfare.

In contrast to *Mrs Dalloway*, *Badhon Hara* associates war with an action of bravery on the part of a soldier. With the initiation of First World War, some of the Bangali young men joined the military force, the “Bangla Paltan”. It was the first time that a Bangali person got any chance to know about military training and the major character of *Badhon Hara*, Nurul is very much excited about it. Nurul’s entry in the Bengali regiment made some of his commanding officers interested about him, because, there was something unusual in him. While most of the other soldiers were reluctant to do hard work, Nurul used to do more than was required. An army life to him is immensely enthralling. According to Nurul, participating in a war is similar to showing valour and masculinity. He says, “A soldier’s mind would be as hard as stone, his chest would be as still as a mountain...” (Islam, 2015, p. 56). Nurul also clarifies his appeal for warfare in these lines, “Mobilization order’ has been announced or we have got order for making arrangements for battle, this is why, preparations are taking place all around. Very soon we have to jump in the fire of Mesopotamia, crossing the Arabian Sea, for this reason, I am overjoyed. I wanted fire — only fire, I wanted fire in the sky, in the air, inside and outside, everywhere in the world” (Islam, 2015, p. 46).

According to Nurul, war is like an adventurous deed. In the novel some characters like Sofia and Shahohika also praise Nurul for showing such courage to enlist himself in the army, according to Rabeya it is Nurul’s “personal great job” (Islam, 2015, p. 24). Nurul says, “The opportunity to get military education that Bangali people have got for the first time, would it be sensible to spoil it? Our main goal is to have modern scientific military education. Our country men have a lot of hopes; we have to honour the love and affection of them upon us by sacrificing our lives” (Islam, 2015, p. 56). Therefore, we can say that in *Badhon Hara*, the misery of common people due to war is not depicted in details, rather it glorifies a Bangali young man’s joining the army during the First World War.

5.2. *The Theme of Love*

Both *Mrs Dalloway* and *Badhon Hara* are tales of unfulfilled love involving three persons, in *Badhon Hara* the love

is among Mahbuba, Sofia and Nurul while in Mrs Dalloway, the connection of love involves Clarissa or Mrs Dalloway, Peter Walsh and Richard Dalloway. Nurul is an apple of the eye of both Mahbuba and Sofia. When guardians make up their minds to arrange a permanent bonding, Nurul leaves the scene and joins the army. Thus, it breaks the heart of Mahbuba, a beautiful and sophisticated lady. At the same time Mahbuba's bosom friend, Sofia never opens up her mind to Nurul or anyone else about her secret love but her attitude after Nurul's departure reveals all her tender feelings about him. After Nurul's departure, Sofia cries day and night in memory of Nurul. To her dear Sahoshika Didi she expresses her true feelings about Nurul. On the other hand, Nurul too was impressed by Mahbuba's beauty and quality but a lady's love could not keep him too far from his true love, a love for fame, glory and freedom. He joins the "Bangla Paltan" to find a real ground for achieving an important glory. While Nurul is in Karachi he can understand Sofia's feelings for him, he feels himself equally in love with both ladies and that is why, it becomes a cause of his great agony and fear. He says, "I believe that if one day two suns rise in the same sky, then something terrible must happen though it may not be written in the almanac" (Islam, 2015, p. 102). After a few months, both Mahbuba and Sofia get married. Nurul decides never to go back to his homeland. Thus, Badhon Hara portrays an unsuccessful love story of three people. To some scholars, Badhon Hara is more a tale of love than a tale of war.

In Mrs Dalloway, the love affair between Clarissa or Mrs Dalloway and Peter Walsh gives us a new outlook about love and bonding. In the beginning of the novel, Mrs Dalloway remembers her lover Peter Walsh with whom she had an exceptionally intimate relationship; "They had always this queer power of communicating without words" (Woolf, 1996, p. 70). It was such a bonding that often "[t]hey went in and out of each other's mind without any effort". They could comprehend each other easily and it was also the reason of their quarrel, she remembers, "[h]ow he scolded her! How they argued" (Woolf, 1996, p. 9). But it is Clarissa who rejected Peter's marriage proposal, when Peter sought her final decision, she said, "[i]t's no use, it's no use. This is the end" (Woolf, 1996, p. 72). Then "[s]he turned, she left him, she went away" (Woolf, 1996, p. 72). According to Peter, the reason "was that she was worldly; cared too much for rank and society" (Woolf, 1996, p. 85) and Richard Dalloway was the person who could give her all that. To Clarissa, "love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul" (Woolf, 1996, p. 140), she believed, "in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be" but "with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable" (Woolf, 1996, p. 72). Peter observed that Richard Dalloway, a promising young man "was falling in love with her; she (Clarissa) was falling in love with Dalloway" (Woolf, 1996, p. 70). So, Clarissa got married and Peter left England for India. After five years when Peter returns to England he can understand that he still loves Clarissa and Clarissa also wonders, "Why did I make up my mind-not to marry him...?" (Woolf, 1996, p. 72).

5.3. *Different sorts of relationships*

In both of the novels we can find relationships of different shades and colours. There are parent-child, husband-wife, brothers-sisters, teacher-student, doctor-patient relationship and relationship between lovers, co-workers and friends.

5.3.1. *Friendship*

In Kazi Nazrul's Badhon Hara, the letters of different characters show us the kind of relationship they have with one another. The central character Nurul writes letters to his friend Robiol and Monuor. In his letters to both of them, it is clear that he has more intimate relationship with Monuor or Monu than with Robiol. He says that the way Robiol claims that Nurul is his dear friend without any hesitation, Nurul on the other hand, does not assert this, because, as Robiol is a married man and seems to be more older mentally than his age, Nurul finds him as a senior brother than a dear friend. While with Monuor, Nurul is comfortable and it is expressed by the words in his letters where Nurul calls him as "monkey". These two friends of Nurul are the persons who gave him a great support, Nurul says, "[i]f Robiol was not there, my life would have gone to some unknown region. Robiol considers me as his loving friend and dearest brother" (Islam, 2015, p. 11).

On the other hand, Mrs Dalloway's life is extremely influenced by her friends. In the beginning of the novel Mrs Dalloway, Clarissa recalls her childhood memories and her friends are mentioned. There are Hugh Whitbread, Peter Walsh, Sally Seton, Fred and many others. She remembers "the admirable" young Hugh and she reveals that "they had known each other as children" (Woolf, 1996, p. 8). Clarissa also describes Sally Seton for whom she had a special feeling, "it was not like one's feeling for a man" (Woolf, 1996, p. 39). Clarissa was fascinated by this

reckless girl. She says, “Sally’s power was amazing, her gift, her personality” (Woolf, 1996, p. 38). She was surprised to notice that Sally owned a rare quality; Sally showed “a sort of abandonment, as if she could say anything, do anything” (Woolf, 1996, p. 37). Often “they talked about life, how they were to reform the world” (Woolf, 1996, p. 38). Throughout her life she has adored this lady and wanted to be like her.

Then we can find young Peter in Mrs Dalloway’s memory, she tells us “how much she owed Peter Walsh”, “How he scolded her! “How they argued”. (Woolf, 1996, p. 41). Clarissa “wanted his good opinion so much”, Peter was her great critic, “they started up every day of her life as if he guarded her” (Woolf, 1996, p. 41). So, the influence of this dear friend is immense in her life.

5.3.2 Sibling Relationship

There are not enough details of Clarissa’s siblings. We can find very little account of Clarissa’s sister and her love for her, but it is enough to realize the depth of love for one’s sibling. Peter Walsh describes the reason of Clarissa’s scepticism and her illness. It was due to the immature death of her loving sister Sylvia, “a girl too on the verge of life, the most gifted of them” (Woolf, 1996, p. 87). She had seen her own sister killed by a falling tree. It was enough for making her life intolerable. That is why she says, “there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity,...to be lived to the end” (Woolf, 1996, p. 203). After the death of her sister, Clarissa “wasn’t so positive, perhaps; she thought there were no Gods” (Woolf, 1996, p. 203).

In Kazi Nazrul’s *Badhon Hara*, a close attachment between siblings is clearly apparent. Here we see that the elder sister or brother has a responsibility to perform towards the younger ones. Sometimes, this brother-sister relationship is not confined to connection of blood only, an elder brother or sister like figure shows affection to someone who is not a relative at all, who can be only an acquaintance. One such acquaintance is Nurul in Robiol’s family. Not only Robiol but also his wife Rabeya loves Nurul as a younger brother. She writes letters to Nurul wishing him a long life and says that she does not find any difference between Nurul and Monuor, her own brother. She says, “That day I have called you my younger brother like my orphan little brother who has lost father and mother” (Islam, 2015, p. 24). So, a different kind of brother- sister relationship is seen here in *Badhon Hara*. The novel also gives us the details of other brother-sister relationship like Rabeya- Monuor and Robiol- Sofia. Rabeya seems to be very much concerned about her brother’s education and future goal. She takes a good care of him and makes arrangements for his marriage with her sister –in-law, Sofia. Robiol on the other hand, feels anxious about his sister Sofia’s gloominess but fails to identify the real cause. He is surprised to find that after Nurul’s departure from India, his sister is crying for Nurul, showing more affection for him than usual and she is praising him for his bravery. Robiol fails to understand Sofia’s true feelings for Nurul and that is why arranges her marriage with Monuor.

5.3.3 Social Contact and Relationship

The old social norms began to collapse in the modern age after the World War I. instead of big and joint families, nuclear families came into existence. People became more self-centered and alienated. Class conflicts are also there. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa Dalloway is the representative of British elite class. Sally thinks, “Clarissa was at heart a snob...” (Woolf, 1996, p. 209). Peter examines that Mrs Dalloway “was worldly; cared too much for rank and society”, “she needed people, always people, to bring it out, with the inevitable result that she frittered her time away, lunching, dining, giving these incessant parties of hers...” (Woolf, 1996, p. 85-87). He also observes that the parties are arranged for the welfare of her husband Richard, because, as a politician, he needs to keep contact with all sorts of people of the society. He says, “these parties, for example, were all for him,...she made her drawing-room a sort of meeting-place;...Over and over again he had seen her take some raw youth, twist him, turn him, wake him up; set him going. Infinite numbers of dull people conglomerated around her, of course...And behind it all was that network of visiting, leaving cards, being kind to people;...all that interminable traffic that women of her sort keep up; but she did it genuinely, from a natural instinct” (Woolf, 1996, p. 86). Outwardly she looks happy and successful but in fact she is dissatisfied with her life, “there was an emptiness about the heart of life” (Woolf, 1996, p. 35). She wants to escape from the bitterness of life, the parties or gathering of people help her forget the reality, the ugliness of present life. She wants to forget her illness, her alienation, her physical pain by seeking “pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well and making her home delightful” (Woolf, 1996, p. 15).

On the other hand, Doris Kilman is a glowing example of class conflict. She is the member of middle class people of England. People look down upon her for her poverty, “She was poor... degradingly poor. Otherwise she would not be taking jobs from people like the Dalloways; from rich people” (Woolf, 1996, p. 136). She knows that Mrs

Dalloway has generated a hatred for her. According to Kilman, Mrs Dalloway “had been merely condescending. She came from the most worthless of all classes – the rich, with a smattering of culture” (Woolf, 1996, p. y 136). Kilman “did not envy women like Clarissa Dalloway; she pitied them (Woolf, 1996, p. 137). She recognizes that people despise her for her poorer status; she declares dejectedly, “I never go to parties... People don’t ask me to parties... ‘Why should they ask me?’... ‘I’m plain, I’m unhappy” (Woolf, 1996, p. 146). Therefore, here we can understand the real picture of social relationship in modern age as depicted in the novel Mrs Dalloway.

Alienation and social distance- the two most important characteristics of modern period are less apparent in Badhon Hara. We can see the picture of joint families with close bonding among kith and kin. A typical Bangali community is portrayed in Kazi Nazrul’s Badhon Hara where we find that it is very normal for them to bestow boundless love and affection to any person or family who doesn’t have any blood relationship at all. One such bonding is seen between Nurul and Robiol’s mother and another one is seen between Mahbuba and Robiol’s family. Robiol’s mother assumes that Nurul is also her own son and she prays for his safety in battlefield. We also find the generosity of Robiol’s mother when she invites Mahbuba and her mother to stay permanently with their family but Mahbuba’s mother sternly rejects this proposal.

Like Clarissa Dalloway, Nurul is a character who loves to mix with people. He is extremely extrovert in nature and all the time he talks about himself. But his friend Robiol thinks that Nurul actually hides some extreme pain inside his mind. Here we can discover a similarity between Nurul and Mrs Dalloway as both of them conceal their inner agony and appear before others as happy and satisfied with life.

5.3.4 Teacher- student Relationship

Both Mrs Dalloway and Badhon Hara show “guru-shishya” or teacher- student relationship. In Mrs Dalloway, Doris Kilman is the tutor of Elizabeth Dalloway. Both Kilman and Elizabeth like each other’s company. But Clarissa despises her for her extreme inclination to religion. About Kilman Clarissa says, “she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel her superiority, your inferiority” (Woolf, 1996, p. 14). She feels that Kilman is “taking her daughter from her”. Kilman also dislikes Clarissa and considers her as her opponent. She thinks, “If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying, You are right! (Woolf, 1996, p. 138). Elizabeth also feels, “Miss Kilman was quite different from any one she knew, she made one feel so small” (Woolf, 1996, p. 144). But Elizabeth does not like parties, gathering of people or anyone’s admiring comment like her mother Mrs Dalloway. She likes her relationship with Dorris Kilman but to Clarissa it is an “odd friendship” (Woolf, 1996, p. 149).

Badhon Hara also depicts teacher- student or “guru-shishya” relationship. In her letter, Rabeya asserts that she has taught Mahbuba reading and writing, cooking and sewing. Rabeya has inspired her to become a sophisticated and cultured woman instead of an illiterate ordinary village girl. When Mahbuba’s mother arranges her wedding with an aged wealthy person, Rabeya feels agony for her. Rabeya thinks that Mahbuba’s mother is awfully cruel as she can sacrifice her daughter by arranging such a wedding. On the other hand, Mahbuba’s mother feels angry when she comes to know that Mahbuba has sent letters to her friend Sofia informing them about her marriage. She feels that her daughter has deceived her. She is shocked to think that her only daughter whom she has reared for ten months inside her womb can go against her will.

5.4 The Theme of Death

Both of the novels present death as an unavoidable situation which alters the stable atmosphere of lives of average people. In Mrs Dalloway, the theme of death is an integral part of the novel and in order to understand the novel completely we have to focus on its function in this novel. Clarissa’s most expected party’s “splendour fell to the floor” when the news of death entered, she felt annoyed to think, “What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party?” The death of a young man made her realize that “it was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress.” She says to herself, “if it were now to die, ‘twere now to be most happy” (Woolf, 1996, p. 202-203).

In the novel Septimus the veteran of war, suffers from nervous breakdown as he has seen his fellow –soldier, Evans, to accept death before his own eyes. After that his illness captures his normal life, he hears the voices of the dead and sees dead person signaling him, it seems to him, “the whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes” (Woolf, 1996, p. 103). Finally he commits suicide because, “Life is made intolerable” (Woolf, 1996, p. 149). Clarissa can feel the attachment with this unknown young man, as she also feels the terror, “the

overwhelming incapacity ... this life, to be lived to the end..." (Woolf, 1996, p. 203).

In *Badhon Hara*, death is the force that changes the fate of human beings. According to Shahoshika, Nurul is a free bird, because, at an early age he has lost his parents, as a result, he does not like to stay at any place for long. He leads the life of a vagabond and lack of a home has inspired him to join the army. He does not even fear to give away his life for the people and his country. Even the love of Mahbuba could not attach him to make a family. On the other hand, the death of Mahbuba's father brings untold miseries to Mahbuba and her mother. Her mother decides to live permanently with her brother's family. Finally Mahbuba's mother arranges Mahbuba's marriage with an aged "Jaminder". So, the death of the father entirely changes the future of the family.

5.5 *The Theme of Religion*

A blind faith in religion is questioned in both novels. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa thinks that it is better to do anything "than sitting mewed in a stuffy bedroom with a prayer book!" (Woolf, 1996, p. 14). "[S]he thought there were no Gods..." and "She was one of the most thorough going sceptics..." (Woolf, 1996, p. 86-87). The death of her loving sister, Sylvia, that she has witnessed, has made her despise religion. (Woolf, 1996, p. 87). She dislikes Miss Kilman, because, she depends too much on religion.

In *Badhon Hara*, religious bigotry is seriously criticized. Nurul's faith upon God is shaken when he lost his parents at an early age. That is why he says, "Whoever be the Creator, I would never forgive Him" (Islam, 2015, p. 47). Rabeya is depressed to see the conflict between Muslims and Hindus and Shahoshika says that she prefers sceptics than extremists. Shahoshika says, "I'm not holding the outward covering of any religion. It is the mistake of extremists" (Islam, 2015, p. 92). Therefore, it seems that Nurul, Rabeya and Shahoshika believe in humanism rather than any established religious doctrine.

5.6 *The Theme of Marriage and a Sense of Freedom*

In both novels, the central characters consider marriage as something which restricts one's freedom. Clarissa was deeply in love with Peter Walsh but "she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced..." (Woolf, 1996, p. 10). Clarissa thinks that, "For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him... But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable..." (Woolf, 1996, p. 10).

Now, if we analyse *Badhon Hara*, we see that Nurul's friend Robiol, his wife Rabeya and other guardians arranges Nurul's marriage with Mahbuba. At first Nurul gives his consent but afterwards changes his mind and leaves West Bengal. Robiol thinks that "the bird was attracted to the golden chain and came nearer to it but when it understood that it has the fear of bondage at once it flies away in the limitless sky (Islam, 2015, p. 15). Robiol criticizes the state of a married person in these lines, "As long as a man does not marry, he possesses two legs... But whenever he gets married, he at once gains two pairs of leg. Thus, he becomes a four-footed animal" (Islam, 2015, p. 13).

Nurul prefers an uncertain future than a secure and reliable home, because, according to Shahoshika, "the person who would not receive bondage, you wanted to tie him up forcefully, is it possible..." (Islam, 2015, p. 87). So, we can see that in both novels the notion of marriage has been compared to a bondage which limits one's independence.

5.7 *Narrative Technique*

After the First World War, the literary pieces deliberately broke away from traditional method of unfolding the story to readers. The writers experimented with different techniques. James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* are some of the famous works with innovative narrative methods. Like *Jacob's Room*, the method of presentation of the story of *Mrs Dalloway* is both impressive and ingenious. Virginia Woolf has chosen the stream of consciousness, memory and flashback for unfolding the events of the novel, *Mrs Dalloway*. In the novel, the awareness of different characters is recorded in details. These continuous flows of thoughts describe the characters emotions and feelings and the reader can form an idea about a particular character. So, this narrative technique is quite complex and it is noticeably a deviation from traditional way of telling a story.

On the other hand, Kazi Nazrul Islam's *Badhon Hara* is one of the first epistolary novels written in Bangla literature. The method of describing a story in the form of some letters is very much innovative and praiseworthy. Although the inner feelings of the characters are not presented there like the stream of consciousness but each of the letters shows its distinctiveness in their style, manner and projection of words. Nazrul tried to separate each letter according to the character's age, gender and circumstances, therefore, Nurul's letter is distinct from Robiol's letter, again Robiol's mother letter is different from Shahoshika's letter. So, Nazrul is successful to apply this method and it gives us a different flavour while reading. Therefore, we can easily perceive that as Mrs Dalloway and *Badhon Hara* both belong to modern times, both writers have attempted to employ innovative narrative methods and we can say that the writers are successful in this case.

6. Conclusion

The novels, *Mrs Dalloway* and *Badhon Hara* portray the people of two different continents: Asia and Europe. Although the people of these two areas are diverse in many ways but their basic human traits are the same. Hence thematically both novels show some similarities. The events of both novels have an indirect link with the Great War but war is not the sole theme in both of these novels. These two novels emphasize human relationship, love and affection and make the readers aware of a sense of freedom. The readers aspire to be unfettered like Nurul or they meditate like Mrs Dalloway to find out the meaning of life. This paper tries to detect the similarities between these two novels of two notorious figures of twentieth century. It is worth mentioning that the novels have praised love rather than conflict or war. At present as most of the countries are engaged with conflicts, our sole duty would be to extend our love for all human beings.

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